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Identical letters dated 7 August 2009 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit a statement of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the anniversary of the tragic events in South Ossetia (see annex).

I should be grateful if the present letter and its annex were circulated as a document of the General Assembly under agenda item 12, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Igor N. **Sheherbak**
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

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Annex to the identical letters dated 7 August 2009 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

Statement of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

6 August 2009

8 August marks the one-year anniversary of the tragic events in South Ossetia. On that night the regime of Mikhail Saakashvili made an ignoble and inhuman attack on its peaceful inhabitants and also on the Russian peacekeepers that had for many years defended the peace and security of the peoples living in the fragile Transcaucasian region.

During the Georgian aggression inhuman types of weapons were massively used — including cluster munitions, volley-fire systems, and 500-kilogram bombs. As a result hundreds of peaceful inhabitants of Tskhinval and neighbouring settlements and dozens of Russian military men, including peacekeepers, died, and the number of wounded and injured is immeasurably greater. To identify many of the dead does not appear possible to this day. The scale of destruction was truly appalling.

The enormous number of human casualties and the appearance of thousands of refugees attest to the fact the fact that this was neither a mistake nor a fortuity by pre-planned criminal actions. The trophy documents of the Georgian army, including the notorious Clean Field plan, unequivocally corroborate this.

Russian citizens experience anger and pain, recalling the events of last August. We mourn together with the South Ossetian people, pay a tribute to the memory of the dead, and promise to continue helping all those who suffered during the conflict.

The tragic events in South Ossetia have again demonstrated to the whole of the international community that there is no alternative to peaceful negotiation methods of resolving disputes and conflicts — unfortunately, at the cost of innocent lives. There is no forgiveness for that, nor can there be. The war criminals must suffer an appropriate punishment. The modern history of Europe knows of quite a few examples on that score.

Georgia's barbaric aggression against the former part of its own State has vividly highlighted the profound cracks in the then existing system of European security. It proved unable to prevent sudden and wide-scale attacks on the territories that were in the sphere of close attention of major international institutions.

The Russian Federation has been a consistent supporter of the political principles for a peaceful settlement in Transcaucasia, acting as an impartial and honest mediator in the United Nations — and OSCE — brokered talks. For 17 years we performed the crucial peacekeeping functions and were ready — in case of a settlement — to assume the role of a guarantor in the agreements of the conflicting sides. But the Georgian authorities chose to shoot up the territorial integrity of their State from Grad missile systems, thus giving up for lost the restoration of an inter-ethnic community with the neighbouring nationalities. Moreover, in the first days after the Tshkinval bloodshed in the Saakashvili regime further aggravated the

situation as it tried to accuse Russia of unleashing the conflict and continued to threaten its neighbours.

In the circumstances we had no way of ensuring the peace and security of the peoples of South Ossetia and Abkhazia other than recognizing their independence and offering them a free democratic choice of their own State and national development. Russia was the first to find the courage to grasp the objective reality. That was the most effective decision, of benefit to everybody, even those who do not want to acknowledge this.

The presence of our troops and border guards under the bilateral agreements that have been ratified by the parliaments is absolutely legitimate. It provides reliable security for the republics and creates conditions for their independent development. Russia will continue rendering extensive socio-economic assistance to the brother peoples of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, primarily in questions of housing and civil infrastructure reconstruction and assistance in the defence of their States and the protection of their borders.

A year after the Georgian aggression the peoples of Transcaucasia, nevertheless, still experience quite a few challenges and problems. Chief among them remains the policy of revanche and the prospect of a relapse of actions of force by Georgia. Despite the failure of the August adventure, the authorities in Tbilisi apparently do not intend to give up plans for a forcible restoration of the "integrity of Georgia". Therefore we must insist on assuming legal obligation not to use force and such obligations must be unconditionally assumed by Georgia not towards Russia, but towards the neighbour republics of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Only in this way can Tbilisi restore at least a minimum of trust towards itself on the part of the neighbouring countries and the international community. The agreements on the non-use of force must contain clear-cut guarantees of security for the peoples of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. This will prevent a repetition of the tragedy. All democratic States and peoples must be interested in averting new outbreaks of violence in the region.

It is also hard to overestimate the need for all countries to refrain during a lengthy period from supplies to Georgia of offensive, and ideally all types of, weapons and military equipment. The massive arms supplies from abroad in recent years created in the Georgian leadership an illusion of impunity and all-permissiveness, and engendered the temptation to solve its problems by military means. The perilous consequences of this are now obvious. The international community must demonstrate a responsible approach in this matter and recognize the new geopolitical changes that took place in Transcaucasia after the August events.

Attempts to carry on as if nothing had happened and to ignore the fully sovereign existence of independent South Ossetia and Abkhazia eventually lead to the closure in these countries and Georgia of the international presences that had generally provided useful assistance to the peoples of the region. That was not our choice. Nor does the responsibility lie on Russia for the withdrawal of the international missions, however hard some people may try to present this.

Nevertheless, we believe that given the proper drawing by all parties concerned of the lessons and conclusions from the tragedy of last August the international community can foster and establish constructive cooperation in

Transcaucasia. The main ways for that are laid down by the Medvedev-Sarkozy plan, the provisions of which Russia has been completely and rigorously fulfilling and will continue to fulfil in the future as well. Only by joint efforts can we preserve peace on our European continent.

The events of August 2008 will remain the focus of attention among politicians and political scientists for a long time to come. It is important that the process of their comprehension should not be a hostage to ideologized or bloc approaches but contribute to the search for adequate ways and means of ensuring stability and security in Transcaucasia.